

*In the December cold, 500 soldiers with rifles and cannons stood guard over the Sioux camp.*

**I**T was bitter cold in the Og-lala Sioux camp that morning 100 years ago. Chief Big Foot lay ill with pneumonia. Around him at **Wounded Knee Creek** in southwestern South Dakota were 120 warriors and 230 women and children.

They were surrounded by 500 soldiers of the U.S. 7th Cavalry Regiment. On a rise overlooking the camp were four big guns.

Neither the Sioux nor the sol-

diers expected a fight. Big Foot had already surrendered. Now the warriors were to hand over their guns.


Both the Sioux and the soldiers were tense and suspicious. A medicine man named Yellow Bird urged the warriors to fight. He and many other Sioux were followers of a new religion called the Ghost Dance. They believed they could not be harmed while wearing shirts painted with magic

symbols. "No white man's bullet may hurt you," Yellow Bird assured the warriors.

Only a few guns had been given up by the Sioux, so Col. James W. Forsyth ordered a search of their teepees. This produced about 40 old guns. Forsyth thought there should be more. He told the warriors to remove their blankets for a body search.

What happened next is uncertain. Some historians believe a





After almost 400  
years of armed  
conflict, the first  
Americans finally  
had to say,

# 'I Will Fight No More Forever'

warrior named Black Coyote fired first in a struggle with a soldier for his rifle. Others think that four warriors yanked Winchester rifles from their blankets and aimed at the soldiers.

In seconds guns were blasting at point-blank range. Soldiers and warriors grappled on the ground with clubs and knives. Then the big guns on the hill opened up. Two-pound explosive shells raked the Sioux tipis.


The Sioux fled in panic across the prairie. What had been a battle turned into a massacre. The soldiers chased the fleeing men, women and children and cut them down without mercy. At least 150 Sioux, including Big Foot and Yellow Bird, were killed. The death toll may have been nearly 300; no one is sure. The Army reported 25 dead and 49 wounded.

That action on Dec. 29, 1890,

was the last battle between the first Americans and the U.S. government. It ended nearly 400 years of armed conflict.

The Indian Wars were not war as we know it today. Rarely were there more than 300 fighters on a side. Many engagements were simply massacres. A party of white settlers or Indians would make a surprise attack and kill every enemy man, woman and child they could find. ▶▶▶





*Before surrendering, the Nez Percé led the Army on a 1,700-mile chase through the Northwest.*

## INDIANS TODAY

The United States has more than 1.4 million American Indians, also called Native Americans. Of more than 300 surviving tribes, the five largest are the Cherokee, Navajo, Sioux, Chippewa and Choctaw, according to 1980 Census figures.

American Indians live on 278

reservations administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and on native lands in Alaska. Many Indians live off the reservations as well. For more information, contact the Public Affairs Office, BIA, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street N.W., Washington, DC 20240.

In the mid-1800's the U.S. Army took over the fight against the Indian tribes. By that time most eastern tribes had been pushed beyond the Mississippi River. Treaties had allotted the tribes most of the land westward to California and Oregon "for as

long as the rivers shall run and the grass shall grow."

But the treaties were often broken when white settlers, miners, and trappers invaded Indian lands. The tribes fought back. Then the Army would be called upon to subdue the Indians.

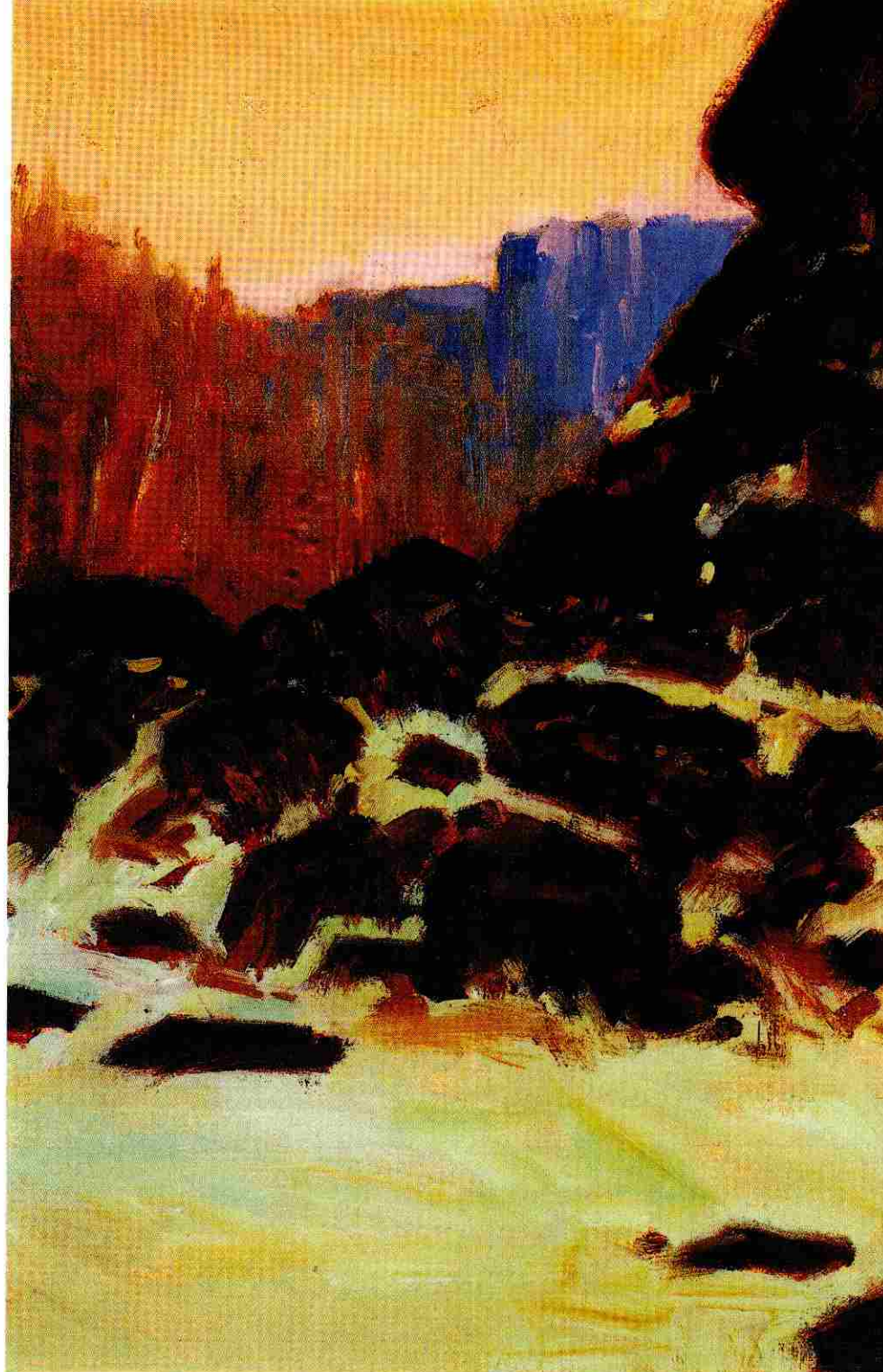
It was an unequal contest. Soldiers usually outnumbered and outgunned Indian war parties.

The Indians fought bravely against great odds. They used hit-and-run tactics like those of today's guerrilla fighters.

Indian tribes did not often unite to fight the invaders. Often they fought among themselves. Some tribes furnished scouts for the Army.

In the vast lands between the Mississippi and the Rocky





## MAJOR BATTLES IN THE WEST

**May 11, 1858:** A hundred Texas Rangers attacked a Comanche village in Oklahoma, killing 76.

**Oct. 1, 1858:** The 2nd Cavalry Regiment swept into a Comanche village in Oklahoma, killing 56 warriors and two women.

**Aug. 18 to Sept. 23, 1862:** At least 800 white settlers were killed in Minnesota during an uprising of the Santee Sioux. It ended when 1,600 state militiamen overwhelmed 600 warriors.

**Jan. 27, 1863:** The 3rd California Infantry Regiment fought 300 Shoshone warriors on the Bear River in Utah. The Shoshone lost 224. The soldiers had 21 dead, 46 wounded.

**Nov. 29, 1864:** The 3rd Colorado Cavalry Regiment massacred 200 Southern Cheyennes at Sand Creek in Colorado.

**Dec. 21, 1866:** Oglala Sioux led by Chief Crazy Horse ambushed 80 soldiers from Fort Phil Kearny in Wyoming and killed all of them.

**April 30, 1871:** At dawn, 148 Papago Indians, Mexicans, and white settlers attacked an Apache village near Tucson, Ariz. They killed at least 86 men, women and children.

**June 25-26, 1876:** At the battle of Little Bighorn in Montana, Sioux and Northern Cheyenne warriors wiped out 225 soldiers led by Lieut. Col. George Armstrong Custer.

**June 17 to Oct. 5, 1877:** In a brilliant display of generalship, Chief Joseph and 300 warriors of the Nez Percé led the Army on a 1,700-mile chase through Idaho, Wyoming and Montana. The Nez Percé defeated the Army in three of five battles along the way before surrendering.

Mountains, the 13 separate tribes of the Sioux were the most powerful nation. They had three of the best war chiefs—Crazy Horse and Red Cloud of the Oglalas, and Sitting Bull of the Hunkpapas. Other fighting tribes on the Great Plains were the Cheyennes, Arapahos, Kiowas and Comanches.

In the Southwest, the Army's main foes were the Apaches. Their most famous leader was Cochise. In the Northwest, the

Army met tough resistance from the Modocs and the Nez Percé.

In the end all the tribes were overwhelmed by the growing tide of settlers and the superior arms of the Army. One by one the tribes settled on reservations.

Wounded Knee was the final blow. After that, all of the tribes joined Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé in saying, "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."✦

—Robert W. Peterson



